

16 Nov. 1699

THE
Poor Man's
P L E A,

To all the
*Proclamations, Declarations,
Acts of Parliament, &c.*

WHICH
Have been, or shall be made, or publish'd,
for a Reformation of Manners, and sup-
pressing Immorality in the Nation.

The Third Edition Corrected.

L O N D O N:

Printed in the Year 1700.

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P L E

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L O N D O N

Printed in the Year 1700

THE PREFACE.

THE Entertainment these Sheets met with at their First and Second Appearance in the Town, and the continual Demand made for them since they were out of Print, has occasioned the Bookseller to desire a Third Edition.

The Subject has had the honour to be well approv'd by the King himself in his Speech to the Parliament at the Opening the present Session; in which he recommended it to their Consideration to examine, Whether the general Depravation of Manners did proceed from a Defect in the Laws already made, or in the Execution of them.

His Majesty has been always very earnest with the People of England to find out some Methods to Reform their Morals; and if 'tis refused, God and the World will testify 'tis their own Fault, not his.

The Parliament has tacitly back'd the Argument, in that they have made no new Laws for Reformation of Manners; they know nothing but Example can do it, and they are wiser than to make Laws to no purpose. ----

What was Proposed by Mr. M----- in the Senatus Concilium of the Nation; in order to the bringing this to pass, may, perhaps, have as good Effect as a Law; and let the City of Westminster know, that 'tis not to no purpose that they are Represented by one of the Ablest and most Sensible Statesmen in the Nation.

The Honour some Persons of the best Judgment have also done me in their Approbation of this small
3 A 2 Piece,

Piece, has oblig'd me to set my Name to it ; which I declin'd before, on a Scruple which they are not pleas'd to approve of, who think I ought not be asham'd to own it : I presume no Man of Sense will Answer what I have advanc'd, with reflection on the Meanness or Imperfections of the Author ; if he does, I shall only return the Language of the Poet : ----

Non Ego Ventosæ Plebis Suffragia Venor.
Horace.

Reformation of Manners is a work so Honourable, and at this time so absolutely necessary, that it must not, it cannot be delay'd ; some Body must begin it : Let no Man envy me the first Post ; I shall begin with my self ; let all men do so, and the Work is over.

The following Sheets lead to the directest Means, viz. Reformation by Example ; Laws are, in Terrorem, Punishments ; and Magistrates compel and put a force upon Mens minds, but Example is persuasive and Gentle, and draws by a secret invisible, and almost involuntary Power.

If any more proper Remedies can be Proposed, they that know them would do well to bring them forth ; in the mean time, Conscience in the Minds of Men impartially consulted, will give a Probatum to the following Proposal ; and to that Judgment I refer all those who Object against it.

De F O E.

T H E

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IN searching for a proper Cure of an Epide-
 mick Distemper, Physicians tell us 'tis first
 necessary to know from what Part of the Bo-
 dy, and from what ill Habit it proceeds; and when
 the Cause is thus discover'd, it is to be removed,
 that the Effect may cease of its self; but if remove-
 ing the Cause will not work the Cure, then indeed
 they proceed to apply proper Remedies to the Dis-
 ease it self, and the particular Part afflicted.

Immorality is without doubt the present reign-
 ing distemper of the Nation: And the King and
 Parliament, who are the proper Physicians, seem

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nobly inclin'd to undertake the Cure. 'Tis a Great Work, well worthy their utmost Pains: The Honour of it, were it once perfected, would add more Trophies to the Crown, than all the Victories of *this Bloody War*, or the Glories of *this Honourable Peace*.

But as a Person under the Violence of a Disease sends in vain for a Physician, unless he resolves to make use of his Prescription; so in vain does the King attempt to reform a Nation, unless they are willing to reform themselves, and to submit to his Prescriptions.

Wickedness is an Ancient Inhabitant in this Country, and 'tis very hard to give its Original.

But however difficult that may be, 'tis as easy to look back to a Time when we were not so generally infected with Vice as we are now; and 'twill seem sufficient to enquire into the Causes of our present Defection.

The Protestant Religion seems to have an unquestion'd Title to the first introducing a strict Morality among us; and 'tis but just to give the Honour of it where 'tis so eminently due. Reformation of Manners has something of a Natural Consequence in it from Reformation in Religion: For since the Principles of the Protestant Religion disown the Indulgencies of the *Roman Pontiff*, by which a Thousand Sins are, as *Venial Crimes*, bought off,

off, and the Priest, to save God Almighty the trouble, can blot them out of the Account before it comes to his hand; common Vices lost their Charter, and men could not sin at so cheap a Rate as before. The Protestant Religion has in it self a Natural Tendency to Virtue, as a standing Testimony of its own Divine Original, and accordingly it has suppress'd Vice and Immorality in all the Countries where it has had a Footing: It has civiliz'd Nations, and reform'd the very Tempers of its Professors: Christianity and Humanity have gone hand in hand in the World; and there is so visible a difference between the other Civiliz'd Governments in the World, and those who now are under the Protestant Powers, that it carries its Evidence in it self.

The Reformation, begun in *England* in the days of King *Edward* the Sixth, and afterwards gloriously finished by Queen *Elizabeth*, brought the *English* Nation to such a degree of Humanity, and Sobriety of Conversation, as we have reason to doubt will hardly be seen again in our Age.

In King *James* the First's time, the Court affecting something more of Gallantry and Gaiety, Luxury got footing; and Twenty Years Peace, together with no extraordinary Examples from the Court, gave too great Encouragement to Licentiousness

If it got footing in King *James* the First's time, it took a deep Root in the Reign of his Son; and the Liberty given the Soldiery in the Civil War, dispers'd all manner of Prophaneness throughout the Kingdom. That Prince, though very Pious in his own Person and Practice, had the Misfortune to be the first King of *England*, and perhaps in the World, that ever established Wickedness by a Law: By what unhappy Council, or secret ill Fate he was guided to it, is hard to determine; but the *Book of Sports*, as it was called, that Book to tolerate the Exercise of all sorts of Sports and Pastimes on the Lord's-Day, tended more to the vitiating the Practice of this Kingdom, *as to keeping that Day*, than all the Acts of Parliament, Proclamations, and Endeavours of future Princes have done, or perhaps ever will do, to reform it.

And yet the People of *England* express'd a general sort of an Aversion to that Liberty; *and some*, as if glutted with too much Freedom, when the Reins of the Law were taken off, refused that Practice they allow'd themselves in before.

In the time of King *Charles* the Second, Lewdness and all manner of Debauchery arriv'd to its Meridian: The Encouragement it had from the Practice and Allowance of the Court, is an invincible Demonstration how far the Influence of our Governors extends in the Practice of the People.

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The present King and his late Queen, whose Memory will be dear to the Nation as long as the World stands, have had all this wicked Knot to unravel. This was the first thing the Queen set upon while the King was engaged in his Wars abroad: She first gave all sorts of Vice a general Discouragement: and on the contrary rais'd the value of Virtue and sobriety by her Royal Example. The King having brought the War to a Glorious Conclusion, and settled an Honourable Peace, in his very first Speech to his Parliament proclaims a New War against Prophaneness and Immorality, and goes on also to discourage the Practice of it by his Royal Example.

Thus the Work is begun nobly and regularly; and the Parliament, the General Representative of the Nation, follows this Royal Example, in enacting Laws to suppress all manner of Prophaneness, &c.

These are Great Things, and well improv'd, would give an undoubted Overthrow to the Tyranny of Vice, and the Dominion Prophaneness has usurp'd in the hearts of men.

But we of the *Plebei* find our selves justly ag-griev'd in all this Work of Reformation; and the Partiality of this Reforming Rigor makes the
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real Work impossible : Wherefore we find our selves forced to seek Redress of our Grievances in the old honest way of Petitioning Heaven to relieve us : And in the mean time, we solemnly Enter our Protestation against all the Vicious Part of the Nobility and Gentry of the Nation ; as follows :

First, We Protest, That we do not find, impartially enquiring into the matter, speaking of Moral Goodness, that you are one jot better than we are, *your Dignities, Estates, and Quality excepted*. 'Tis true, we are all bad enough, and we are willing in good Manners to agree, that we are as wicked as you ; but we cannot find on the exactest Scrutiny, but that in the Commonwealth of Vice, the Devil has taken care to level Poor and Rich into one Class, and is fairly going on to make us all Graduates in the last Degree of Immorality.

Secondly, We do not find that all the Proclamations, Declarations, and Acts of Parliament yet made, have any *effective Power* to punish *you* for your Immoralities, as it does *us*. Now while *you* make Laws to punish *us*, and let *your selves* go free, though guilty of the same Vices and Immoralities, those Laws are unjust and unequal in themselves.

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'Tis true, the Laws do not exprefs a Liberty to you, and a Punishment to us ; and therefore the King and Parliament are free, as King and Parliament, from this our Appeal ; but the Gentry and Magistrates of the Kingdom, while they execute thole Laws upon us the poor Commons, and themselves practising the same Crimes, in defiance of the Laws both of God and Man, go unpunish'd ; *This* is the Grievance we protest against, as unjust and unequal.

Wherefore, till the Nobility, Gentry, Justices of the Peace, and Clergy, will be pleased either to reform their own Manners, and suppress their own Immoralities, or find out some Method and Power impartially to punish themselves when guilty, we humbly crave Leave to object against letting any Poor Man in the *Stocks*, or sending him to the *House of Correction* for Immoralities, as the most unequal and unjust way of proceeding in the World.

And now Gentlemen,

That this Protestation may not seem a little too rude, and a Breach of Good Manners to our Superiors, we crave Leave to subjoin our humble Appeal to your selves ; and will for once, knowing you as *English* Gentlemen to be Men of Honour, *make you Judges in your own Case.*

First,

First, Gentlemen, we appeal to your selves, whether ever it be likely to perfect the Reformation of Manners in this Kingdom, without you: Whether Laws to punish us, without your Example also to influence us, will ever bring the Work to pass.

The first Step from a loose vicious Practice in this Nation, was begun by King *Edward* the Sixth, back'd by a Reform'd Clergy, and a Sober Nobility: Queen *Elizabeth* carried it on. They were the Kings and the Gentry which first again degenerated from that strict Observation of Moral Virtues, and from thence carried Vice on to that degree it now appears in. From the Court Vice took its Progress into the Country; and in the Families of the Gentry and Nobility it harbour'd, till it took heart under their Protection, and made a general Sally into the Nation; and We the poor Commons, who have been always easy to be guided by the Examples of our Landlords and Gentlemen, have really been debauch'd into Vice by their Examples: And it must be the *Example of You the Nobility and Gentry of the Kingdom*, that must put a Stop to the Flood of Vice and Prophaneness which is broken in upon the Country, or it will never be done.

Our Laws against all manner of Vicious Practices are already very severe: But Laws
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are useless insignificant things, if the Executive Power which lies in the Magistrate be not exerted. The Justices of the Peace have the Power to punish, but if they do not put forth that Power, 'tis all one as if they had none at all: Some have possibly exerted this Power; where-ever it hath been so put forth, it hath fallen upon us the poor Commons: These are all Cobweb Laws, in which the small Flies are catch'd, and the great ones break through. My Lord Mayor has whipt about the poor Beggars, and a few scandalous Whores have been sent to the House of Correction; some Ale-housekeepers and Vintners have been fin'd for drawing Drink on the Sabbath day; but all this falls upon us of the Mob, the poor *Plebeii*, as if all the Vice lay among us; for we don't fin'd the Rich Drunkard carri'd before my Lord Mayor, nor a Swearing Lewd Merchant punished. *The man with a Gold Ring and Gay Cloaths*, may Swear before the Justice, or at the Justice; may reel home through the open Streets, and no man take any notice of it; but if a Poor Man get drunk, or swears an Oath, he must to the Stocks without Remedy.

In the second place, we appeal to your selves, whether Laws or Proclamations are capable of having any Effect towards a Reformation of Manners, while the very Benches of our Justices are infected with the scandalous Vices of Swearing and Drunkenness;

kennels; while our Justices themselves shall punish a man for Drunkenness, with a *God damn him, set him in the Stocks*: And if Laws and Proclamations are useless in the Case, then they are good for nothing, and had as good be let alone as publish'd.

'Tis hard, Gentlemen, to be punish'd for a Crime, by a man as guilty as our selves; and that the Figure a man makes in the World, must be the reason why he shall or shall not be liable to a Law: This is really punishing men for being poor, which is no Crime at all; as a Thief may be said to be hang'd, not for the Fact, but for being taken.

We further appeal to your selves, Gentlemen, to inform us, whether there be any particular reason why you should be allow'd the full Career of your corrupt Appetites, without the Restraint of Laws, while you your selves agree that such Offences shall be punished in us, and do really execute the Law upon the Poor People, when brought before you for the same things.

Wherefore, that the Work of Reformation of Manners may go on, and be brought to Perfection, to the Glory of God, and the great Honour of the King and Parliament: That Debauchery and Prophaness, Drunkenness, Whoring, and all sorts of Immoralities may be suppress'd, we humbly propose the Method which may effectually accomplish so great a Work.

First.

First. That the Gentry and Clergy, who are the Leaders of us poor ignorant people, and our Lights erected on high places to guide and govern us, would in the first place put a voluntary Force upon themselves, and effectually reform their own Lives, their way of Converſing, and their common Behaviour among their Servants and Neighbours.

1. The Gentry. They are the Original of the Modes and Customs, and Manners of their Neighbours; and their Examples *in the Countries eſpecially* are very moving. There are three ſeveral Vices which have the principal Management of the greateſt part of Mankind, *viz.* Drunkenneſs, Swearing and Whoring; all of them very ill becoming a Gentleman, however Cuſtom may have made them Modiſh: Where none of theſe Three are in a Houſe, there is certainly ſomething of a Plantation of God in the Family; for they are ſuch Epidemic Diſtempers, that hardly Human Nature is entirely free from them.

Drunkenneſs, that brutiſh Vice; a Sin ſo ſordid, and ſo much a Force upon Nature, that had God Almighty enjoyn'd it as a Duty, I believe many a man would have ventur'd the loſs of Heaven, rather than have perform'd it. The Pleaſure of it ſeems to be ſo ſecretly hid, that wild Heathen Nations know nothing of the matter; 'tis only diſcover'd by the wiſe people of theſe *Northern Countries,*

who are grown Proficients in Vice, Philosophers in Wickedness, who can extract a Pleasure to themselves in *losing their Understanding, and make themselves sick at heart for their Diversion.*

If the History of this well bred Vice was to be written, 'twould plainly appear that it begun among the Gentry, and from them was handed down to the poorer sort, who still love to be like their Betters. After the Restitution of King *Charles the Second*, when drinking the King's Health became the distinction between a *Cavalier* and a *Roundhead*, Drunkenness began its *Reign*, and it has reign'd almost Forty Years: The Gentry carels'd this Beastly Vice at such a Rate, that no Companion, no Servant was thought proper, unless he could bear a Quantity of Wine; and to this day 'tis added to the Character of a Man, as an additional Title, when you would speak well of him, *He is an honest Drunken Fellow*; as if his Drunkenness was a Recommendation of his Honesty. From the practice of this nasty Faculty, our Gentlemen have arriv'd to the teaching of it; and that it might be effectually preserv'd to the next Age, have very early instructed the Youth in it. Nay, so far has Custom prevail'd, that the Top of a Gentleman's Entertainment has been to make his Friend drunk; and the Friend is so much reconcil'd to it, that he takes that for the effect of his Kindness,

ness, which he ought as much to be affronted at, as if he had kick'd him down Stairs: Thus 'tis become a Science; and but that the instruction proves so easy, and the Youth too apt to learn, possibly we might have had a College erected for it before now.

The further Perfection of this Vice among the Gentry, will appear in two things; that 'tis become the Subject of their Glory, and the way of expressing their Joy for any publick Blessing. *Jack*, said a Gentlemen of very high Quality, when after the Debate in the House of Lords, King *William* was voted into the vacant Throne; *Jack* (says he) *God damn ye, Jack, go home to your Lady, and tell her we have got a Protestant King and Queen; and go and make a Bonfire as big as a House, and bid the Butler make ye all drunk, ye Dog: Here was Sacrificing to the Devil, for a Thanksgiving to God.* Other Vices are committed as Vices, and men act them in private, and are willing to hide them; but Drunkenness they are so fond of, that they will glory in it, boast of it, and endeavour to promote it as much as possibly in others: 'Tis a Triumph to a Champion of the Bottle, to repeat how many Quarts of Wine he has drank at a sitting, and how he made such and such Honest Fellows drunk. Men *Lye* and *Forswear*, and *hide it*, and are *asham'd* of it, as indeed they have reason to do: But Drunkenness and Whoring are Accomplishments men begin to value

lue themselves upon, repeat them with pleasure, and affect a sort of Vanity in the History; are content all the world should be witnesses of their intemperance, have made the Crime a Badge of Honour to their Breeding, and introduce the practice as a Fashion. And whoever gives himself the trouble to reflect on the Custom of our Gentlemen in their Families encouraging and promoting this Vice of Drunkenness among the poor Commons, will not think it a Scandal upon the Gentry of *England*, if we say, That the Mode of drinking, as 'tis now practised, had its Original from the Practice of the Country Gentlemen, and they again from the Court.

It may be objected, and God forbid it should not, That there are a great many of our Nobility and Gentlemen, who are Men of Honour and Men of Morals; and therefore this Charge is not universal. To which we answer, 'Tis universal for all that; because those very Gentlemen, tho' they are negatively clear as to the Commission of the Crimes we speak of, yet are positively guilty, in not executing that Power the Law has put into their hands; with an impartial Vigor. For where was that Gentleman or Justice of the Peace ever yet found, who executed the Terms of the Law upon a Drunken, Swearing, Lewd Gentleman, his Neighbour, but the Quality of the Person has been a License to the
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open Exercise of the worst Crimes; as if there were any Lords, Baronets, Knights, or Squires in the next World; who because of those little Steps Custom has rais'd them on, higher than their Neighbours, should be exempted from the Divine Judicature; or that, as Captain *Vratz* said, who was Hang'd for murth'ring Esquire *Thynn*, *God would show them some respect as they were Gentlemen.*

If there were any reason why a Rich Man should be permitted in the publick Exercise of Open Immoralities, and not the Poor Man, something might be said: But if there be any difference it lies the other way; for the Vices of a Poor Man affect only himself; but the Rich Man's Wickedness affects all the Neighbourhood, gives offence to the Sober, encourages and hardens the Lewd, and quite overthrows the weak Resolutions of such as are but indifferently fix'd in their Virtue and Morality. *If my own watch goes false, it deceives me and none else; but if the Town-Clock goes false, it deceives the whole Parish.* The Gentry are the Leaders of the Mob; if they are Lewd and Drunken, the others strive to imitate them; if they Discourage Vice and Intemperance, the other will not be so forward in it, nor so fond of it.

To think then to effect a Reformation by Punishing the Poor, while the Rich seem to Enjoy
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a Charter for Wickedness, is like *taking away the Effect, that the Cause may cease.*

We find some People very fond of Monopolizing a Vice, they would have all of it to themselves; they must, as my Lord *Rochester* said of himself, *Sin like a Lord*; little sneaking Sins won't serve turn; but they must be Lewd at a rate above the Common Size, to let the World see they are capable of it.

Our Laws seems to take no Cognizance of such, perhaps for the same reason that *Lycurgus* made no Law against *Parricide*, because he would not have the Sin named among his Citizens.

Now the Poor Man sees no such Dignity in Vice, as to study Degrees; we are downright in Wickedness, as we are in our Dealings; if we are Drunk, 'tis plain Drunkenness; Swearing, and Whoring, is all Blunderbus with us; we don't affect such Niceties in our Conversation; and the Justices use us accordingly; nothing but the Stocks, or the House of Correction is the Case, when we are brought before them; but when our Masters the Gentlemen come to their Refined Practice, and Sin by the Rules of Quality, we do not find any thing come of it but false Heraldry, the Vice is punish'd by the Vice, and the Punishment renews the Crime.

The Case in short is this ; the Lewdness, Prophaneness, and Immorality of the Gentry, which is the main Cause of the General Debauchery of the Kingdom is not at all toucht by our Laws, as they are now executed ; and while it remains so, the Reformation of Manners can never be brought to pass, nor Prophaness and Immorality Suppress'd ; and therefore the punishing the Poor distinctly, is a Mock upon the good Designs of the King and Parliament ; an Act of Injustice upon them to punish them, and let others as guilty go free ; and a sort of Cruelty too, in taking the advantage of their Poverty to make them suffer, because they want Estates to purchase their Exemption.

We have some weak Excuses for this Matter, which must be considered : As,

(1.) The Justice of the Peace is a *Passive Magistrate*, till an Information be brought before him, and is not to take notice of any thing, but as it is laid in Fact, and brought to an Affidavit. Now if an Affidavit be made before a Justice, that such or such a man Swore, or was Drunk, he must he cannot avoid Fining him ; the Law obliges him to it, let his Quality be what it will ; so that the Defect is not in the Law, nor in the Justice, but in the want of Information.

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(2.) The Name of an Evidence or Informer is so scandalous, that to attempt to inform against a man for the most open Breach of the Laws of Morality, is enough to denominate a man unfit for Society; a Rogue and an Informer are Synonymous in the Vulgar Acceptation; so much is the real Detection of the openest Crimes against God, and Civil Government, Discouraged and Avoided.

(3.) The Impossibility of the Cure is such, and the Habit has so obtain'd upon all Mankind, that it seems twisted with Human Nature, as an Appendix to Natural Frailty, which it is impossible to separate from.

For Answer ;

1. 'Tis true, the Justice of the Peace is in some respect a *Passive Magistrate*, and does not act but by Information, but such Information would be brought if it were encouraged; if Justices of the Peace did acquaint themselves with their Neighbourhood, they would soon hear of the Immoralities of the Parish; and if they did impartially Execute the Law on such as offended, without Respect of Person, they would soon have an Account of the Persons and Circumstances. Besides, 'tis not want of Information, but want of punishing what they have
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Information of. A Poor Man Informs against a Great Man, the Witness is discouraged, the man goes unpunish'd, and the Poor man gets the scandal of an Informer; and then 'tis but too often that ~~our~~ Justices are not men of extraordinary Morals themselves; and who shall Inform a Justice of the Peace that such a man Swore, when he may be heard to Swear himself as fast as another? or who shall bring a man before a Justice for being Drunk, when the Justice is so Drunk himself, he cannot order him to be set in the Stocks?

(2.) Besides, the Justice has a power to punish any Fact he himself sees committed, and to enquire into any he hears of casually; and if he will stand still and see those Acts of Immorality committed before his Face, who shall bring a Poor Man before him to be punished? Thus I have heard a Thousand horrid Oaths sworn on a Bowling Green, in the presence of a Justice of the Peace, and he take no notice of it, and go home the next hour and set a man in the Stocks for being Drunk.

As to the Scandal of Informing, 'tis an *Error in Custom*, and a great Sin against Justice; 'tis necessary indeed that all Judgment should be according to Evidence, and to discourage Evidence is to discourage Justice; but that a

man in Trial of the Morality of his Neighbour, should be ashamed to appear; must have some particular Cause.

It proceeds from the Modishness of the Vice; it has so obtain'd upon mens Practices, that to appear against what almost all men approve, seems malicious, and has a certain prospect either of Revenge, or of a Mercenary Wretch, that Informs merely to get a Reward. 'Tis true, if no Reward be placed upon an Information, no man will take the trouble; and again if too great a Reward, Men of Honour shun the thing, because they scorn the Fee; and to inform merely for the Fee, has something of a Rascal in it too; and from these Reasons arises the backwardness of the People.

The very same Rich Men we speak of are the persons who discourage the discovery of Vice, by scandalizing the Informer; a man that is any thing of a Gentleman scorns it, and the Poor still Mimick the humour of the Rich, and hate an Informer as they do the Devil. 'Tis strange the Gentlemen should be ashamed to detect the Breach of those Laws, which they are not ashamed to make; but the very Name of an Informer has gain'd so black an Idea in the minds of People, because some who have made a Trade of Informing against People for Religion

gion, have misbehaved themselves, that truly 'twill be hard to bring any man either of Credit or Quality to attempt it.

But the main thing which makes our Gentlemen backward in the prosecution of Vice, is their practising the same Crimes themselves, and they have so much wicked Modesty and Generosity in them, being really no Enemies to the thing it self, that they cannot with any sort of freedom punish in others, what they practice themselves.

In the times of Executing the Laws against Dissenters, we found a great many Gentlemen very vigorous in prosecuting their Neighbours; they did not stick to appear in Person to disturb Meetings, and Demolish the Meeting-Houses, and rather than fail, would be Informers themselves; the reason was because they had also a dislike to the thing; but we never found a Dissenting Gentleman, or Justice of the Peace forward to do thus, because they approved of it. Now were our Gentlemen and Magistrates real Enemies to the Immoralities of this Age, did they really hate Drunkenness as a Vice, they would be forward and zealous to root the practice of it out of the Neighbourhood, they would not be backward or ashamed to detect Vice, to disturb Drunken Assemblies, to disperse those

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Plantations of Leachery, the Publick Bawdy Houses, which are almost as openly allowed as the *Burdelloes* in *Italy*. They would be willing to have all sorts of Vices Suppress'd, and glory in putting their hands to the Work; they would not be asham'd to appear in the detecting Debauchery, nor affraid to embroil themselves with their Rich Neighbours. 'Tis Guilt of the same Fact which makes Connivance, and till that Guilt be removed, the Gentlemen of *England* neither will nor can indeed with any kind of of Honour put their hands to the Work of Reforming it in their Neighbours.

But I think 'tis easy to make it appear that this difficulty of Informing may be remov'd, and there need not be much occasion for that Scandalous Employment.

'Tis in the power of the Gentry of *England* to Reform the whole Kingdom without either Laws, Proclamations, or Informers; and without their Concurrence, all the Laws, Proclamations, and Declarations in the World will have no Effect; the Vigour of the Laws consists in their Executive Power; Ten thousand Acts of Parliament signify no more than One single Proclamation, unless the Gentlemen in whose hands the Execution of those Laws is placed, take care to see them duly made use of; and how

how can Laws be duly Executed, but by an Impartial Distribution of equal Rewards and Punishments, without regard to the Quality and Degree of the Persons? The Laws push on the Justices now, and they take care to go no faster than they are driven; but would the Justices push on the Laws, Vice would flee before them as Dust in the wind, and Immoralities would be soon suppress'd; but it can never be expected that the Magistrates should push on the Laws to a free Suppression of Immoralities, till they Reform themselves, and their great Neighbours Reform themselves, that there may be none to punish who are too big for the Magistrate to venture upon.

Would the Gentry of *England* decry the Modishness of Vice by their own Practice; would they but dash it out of Countenance by disowning it; that Drunkenness and Oaths might once come into *disesteem*, and be out of Fashion and a Man valued the less for them; that he that will Swear, and be Drunk, shall be counted a *Rake*, and not fit for a Gentleman's Company. This would do more to Reforming the rest of Mankind than all the Punishments the Law can inflict; the Evil increased by Example, and must be Suppress'd the same way. If the Gentry were thus Reform'd

form'd, their Families would be so too: No Servant would be Entertain'd, no Workman Employ'd, no Shopkeeper would be Traded with by a Gentleman, but such as like themselves, were sober and honest; a Vicious Drunken Footman must Reform or Starve, he would get no Service; a Servant once turn'd away for his Intemperance would be Entertain'd by no body else; a Swearing Debauch'd Labourer or Workman must Reform, or no body would employ him; the Drunken Whoring Shopkeeper must grow Sober, or lose all his Customers and be undone. Interest and Good Manners would Reform us of the poorer sort, there would be no need of the Stocks or Houses of Correction; we should be sober of course, because we should be all Beggars else; and he that loved his Vice so dearly, as to purchase it with the loss of his Trade or Employment, would soon grow too poor for his Vice, and be forced to leave it by his own Necessities; there would be no need of Informers; a Vicious Fellow would be presently Notorious, he would be the Talk of the Town, every one would slight and shun him for fear of being thought like him by being seen in his Company; he would expose himself, and would be punish'd as unpitied as a Thief.

So that in short, the whole Weight of this Blessed Work of Reformation lies on the Shoulders of the Gentry; they are the Cause of our Defection, which being taken away the Effect would cease of course, Vice would grow Scandalous, and all Mankind would be asham'd of it.

(2.) The Clergy also ought not to count themselves exempted in this matter, whose Lives have been, and in some places still are so vicious and so loose, that 'tis well for England we are not subject to be much Priest-ridden.

'Tis a strange thing how it shou'd be otherwise than it is with us the poor Commonalty, when the Gentry our Pattern, and the Clergy our Teachers, are as Immoral as we. And then to consider the Coherence of the thing; the Parson preaches a thundering Sermon against Drunkenness, and the Justice of Peace sets my poor Neighbour in the Stocks, and I am like to be much the better for either, when I know perhaps that this same Parson and this same Justice were both Drunk together the Night before.

It may be true, for ought we know, that a Wicked Parson may make a good Sermon; and the Spanish Proverb may be true of the Soul as well as the Body, *If the Cure be but wrought, let the Devil be the Doctor*; but this does not take with the downright ignorant People in the Country; a Poor Man gets Drunk in a Country Ale-house,

Why, are you not ashamed to be such a Beast, says a good honest Neighbour to him the next day? Asham'd, says the Fellow! Why should I be ashamed? Why, there was Sir John--- and Sir Robert--- and the Parson, and they were all as Drunk as I. And why a Beast, Pray? I heard Sir Robert--- say, That

*He that Drinks least,
Drinks most like a Beast.*

A Vicious Parson that preaches well, but lives ill, may be like an unskilfull Horseman, who opens a Gate on the wrong side, and lets other Folks through, but shuts himself out. This may be possible, but it seems most reasonable to think they are a means by that sort of living, to hinder both themselves and others; and would the Gentry and Clergy of *England* but look back a little on the Guilt that really lies on them, as Gentlemen by whose example so great a part of Mankind has been led into, and encouraged in the Progress of Vice, they would find Matter of very serious reflection.

This Article of the Clergy may seem to lie in the power of their Superiors to rectify, and therefore may be something more feasible than the other; But the Gentry who are *Sui Juris*,
can

can no way be reduced but by their own voluntary practice. We are in *England* exceedingly govern'd by Modes and Customs. The Gentry may effectually Suppress Vice, would they but put it out of Fashion; but to Suppress it by Force seems impossible.

The Application of this rough Doctrine is in short both to the Gentry and Clergy, *Physicians Heal your selves*; if you will leave off your Drunkenness and Lewdness first, if we do not follow you, than set us in the Stocks, and send us to the House of Correction, and punish us as you please; if you will leave off Whoring first, then Brand us in the Foreheads, or Transport or Hang us for Fornication or Adultery, and you are welcome; but to preach against Drunkenness immediately after an Evening's Debauch; to Correct a poor Fellow for Swearing with the very Vice in your Mouths; these are the unjustest ways in the World, and have in themselves no manner of tendency towards the Reformation of Manners, which is the true Design of the Law.

'Tis acknowledg'd there are in *England* a great many Sober, Pious, Religious Persons both among the Gentry and Clergy, and 'tis hoped such cannot think themselves Libell'd or Injur'd in this Plea; if there were not, Laws would never have been made against those Vices, for no men

make Laws to punish themselves; 'tis design'd
 to reflect upon none but such as are Guilty, and
 on them no farther than to put them in mind
 how much the Nation owes its present Degeneracy
 to their folly, and how much is in their
 power to Reform it again by their Example;
 that the King may not publish Proclamations,
 nor the Parliament make Laws to no purpose;
 but that we might live in *England* once more like
 Christians, and like Gentlemen, in the Glory of
 God, and the Honour of the present King and
 Parliament, who so publickly have attempted the
 Great Work of Reformation among us, though
 hitherto to so little purpose.

FINIS.

